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Reading Lessons for the Primary Grades

Literature Series No. 12

Flora J. Cooke

Birds

The Mole and the Lark

(ADAPTED FROM HANS ANDERSEN)

It was autumn. The leaves were falling and the cold winds had begun to blow. Many birds had gone South, but one little lark had broken her wing and could not go. Her nest had blown away, so she had no home. It began to snow, and the poor little lark was frightened indeed. After a while she saw an opening in the ground and hopped into it.

She found herself in a long, dark hall, but she hopped on and on, dragging her broken wing.

At last a strange voice stopped her. "Who comes here? What do you wish?" it said. It was so dark that the poor lark could not see who spoke to her. When the glow-worms came with lights she trembled with fear, for she saw an old mole and all of his family. But she bravely told her sad story, and begged to stay a while in the mole's home.

"You may stay," said the mole, "and since birds sing, you may sing to us for your living."

Though they did not understand the ways of the lark at all, the mole household were very kind to her and she stayed all winter with them.

All the songs that she knew were about the trees or the sunshine.

The mole did not like these songs. "Those songs are foolish," he said. "The sun is not beautiful. Its light hurts my eyes."

"Then what shall I sing about?" said the poor lark.

“Sing about my soft fur,” said the mole, “or sing about our fine store of food.”

The little lark felt sad; but she wanted to please the mole. She knew that he could not see the sun, and she felt very sorry for him.

All winter long she made new songs. She sang of the mole’s home and his fur and his children. The mole understood these songs and liked them.

“You must never leave us,” said he.

“You are very kind,” sang the lark. “I thank you with all my heart.”

But she longed all the time for the bright sun. Her wing was now well again, but she did not think of leaving the mole.

One day she saw a beam of light at the end of the hall. She hopped toward it faster and faster and soon she was out in bright sunlight again.

The snow had gone. The grass was green, and the flowers were blooming. The lark forgot the darkness and the mole. She flew high in the sky, and sang with great joy. Many friends heard her voice and followed her.

“She sings better than ever,” they said. “Her voice is sweeter. Tell us where you have been all winter, friend Lark?”

The lark sang to them all her songs of the mole, of his food and his fur and his children. But the larks did not understand these songs.

“Don’t sing of darkness and stupid old moles,” they said. “Sing that song of the sunshine. That was beautiful.”

And the little lark did sing it. She sang it better than any one else.

The Birds of Killingworth

(ADAPTED FROM LONGFELLOW'S POEM)

It was spring in the little town of Killingworth. The grass was green and many flowers were in bloom. The trees had new leaves and the spring birds were singing in the trees.

Flocks of crows were settling near the corn-field. "Last year the crows ate much corn," said the farmers. "The other birds ate the fruit and grain. We will not bear it. We will protect our crop," they said. So they called a great meeting.

They decided that all birds should die. One thoughtful man tried to save them, but the farmers said: "Why should we listen to him? The birds are our enemies. They must die!"

So all the old birds were killed, and the little ones starved in their nests.

Then summer-time came. The air was still and hot. No birds sang sweet songs. The farmers had forgotten one thing. A great many insects soon came. They ate all the leaves and flowers, so that no grain or fruit grew.

It was a sad, sad summer.

Oh, how the people wished for the birds! They longed for their sweet songs. They were quite willing to give them their share of food.

The next spring a great wagon came into Killingworth. It was covered with green branches and vines. Among the branches were many cages full of birds.

The children shouted with joy when they saw them. They opened the cage doors and set the birds free. They flew singing to the trees and built new nests.

That was a happy summer in Killingworth.

Buds

Science Series No. 7

Flora J. Cooke

(NOTE: Record of a first-grade class of children in May, 1894, upon the opening of buds on trees in the park surrounding the Normal School. Children will compare this with their records for this year.)

We began looking at the buds on the trees in March.

We did not find any open buds then.

All the buds were small and black.

One day we found little green points in the end buds on the willow tree.

After a while we found green points in the ash-leaf-maple buds.

In April we found green points in the buds on all the trees.

Then the buds began to open.

The ash-leaf-maple buds opened first.

Just the buds on the ends of the twigs opened.

Now the willow tree has more open buds than any other tree.

All the open buds are on the sides.

The end buds on the willow tree are not alive now.

They were alive in March, but they were very small and thinly covered.

We think a frost must have killed them.

The oak buds had the thickest coats.

Nearly all the trees have leaves now.

Flowers came on our crab-apple tree before the leaves came.

Catkins came on our cotton-wood tree before the leaves came.

We think the oak-tree leaves are the prettiest.

They are a soft light green or red.

The buds on the oak tree opened the first week in May.

Trees

The trees need water.
The trees need soil.
The trees need heat.
The trees need light.

The trees give beauty and shade.
They give fruit.
They give wood.

Questions

Do the trees give most or take most?
Do the trees ever give heat or light or soil or water?

A Tree Rhyme

“If all the trees were one tree,
What a great tree that would be!
And if all the seas were one sea,
What a great sea that would be!
If all the axes were one ax,
What a great ax that would be!
And if all the men were one man,
What a great man he would be!
And if the great man
Should take his great ax,
And cut down the great tree,
And it should fall into the great sea,
What a splash there would be!”

The Water System of Chicago

(ADAPTED FOR THIRD GRADE)

Geography Series No. 2

Gertrude Van Hoesen

It was the year 1863, and the city of Chicago was growing larger and larger. Before this time the people had obtained their water from the Chicago River, and from that part of the lake near the shore. Now the sewers emptied into the river and the river emptied into the lake. This made the water very impure.

In cold weather minnows, alive and swimming, came from every faucet. The water tasted and smelled of fish, and one had to look twice in his glass to see that he did not swallow one alive. Visitors from other cities made fun of us, and said that they would not live in Chicago, for the water was so impure.

Chicago was then the largest city in the West. It had many railroads; people were still coming from other cities; many grew rich; there were schools and churches, and the people numbered 350,000. The citizens became tired of the poor water supply, and said that something must be done.

Most of the men were away as soldiers in the war, but those who were at home were trying to find a way of getting pure water. Many plans were made, but were of no use. To be sure, there was plenty of pure water in sight, for it was found that Lake Michigan was as clear and cold as crystal about two miles from the shore. But the problem was, "how to get the water to the shore." A plan was thought of by Mr. Chesbrough, the city engineer, and we shall see how this plan was worked out.

The Crib

Nearly thirty-six years ago some men in Chicago thought of doing a strange thing. They thought of building a house out in Lake Michigan. It was to be a house that people could live in. It had to be very strong, for the wind blows hard out on the lake, and the waves are always dashing about and tugging and pulling. They never seem to be tired. It would not take them long to tear down a house no stronger than ours are.

What is it that makes a house firm and strong? It is the foundation which is laid several feet down in the ground. Was it not strange for these men to think of building a house out where there was no ground for a foundation? The water was deeper than some of our houses are high. Many people laughed at these men and said they could not do it. But these men were wise, and they were determined to carry out their plans. They went to work in this way. Since there was no ground for a foundation, they decided to make the ground. They decided to make an island in the lake.

First they made a curious box-like building. This they built on the shore near the river. It had five sides. Because it had five sides we call it a pentagonal building. This pentagonal building was nearly as large as the Palmer House. It had three strong walls, with a space of three feet between them.

Many tons of iron bolts were used to make the walls strong. Its floor and walls were covered with tar, and all the little cracks were stopped up. When little cracks are stopped up in a vessel, we say the vessel is caulked. Ships are tarred and caulked when made ready for the sea. Now do you see what these men were going to do with this building? They were going to float it right out on the lake.

When, after many days, the building was finished, crowds of people gathered to see it launched. They cheered again and again

as it moved slowly down the bank of the river. It was moved on rollers, just as houses are moved. Finally it floated in the river. Tug-boats fastened ropes to it and puffed away, drawing the huge box behind them. On and on they went for miles. They stopped where the men wanted the island to be. Then they did something that will surprise you. They opened doors in the sides of the building. What happened then? It sank to the bottom of the lake. But it was so high that several feet remained above the surface of the water.

Then they brought a great many stones on boats. They thought a stone island would be stronger than an earth one. They put the stones in between the three walls of the building. They filled it up to the top. But they wanted a well on the island. They left a round hole in the center. They put a big iron cylinder in this hole. Stones were put in all around it.

Do you see how they had made a strong island? They had made a well, too. Now they had the island to build the house on. They built a nice, large house on it. Everybody was glad the men had done what they had determined to do. There was great rejoicing in our city.

The island and the house together were called the crib.
What was the well for? We shall find out another time.

The Tunnel

The cylinders of the crib opened into the tunnel, which was sixty-nine feet below the level of the lake. The tunnel was five and one-sixth feet high, five feet wide, and two miles long. The men who worked in the tunnel were miners and bricklayers. One party of men started from the crib and dug towards the shore, and another party started from the shore and dug towards the crib. The men were in this great hole for three years.

Although the men were jolly most of the time, yet they were always in fear. They thought of the terrible place they were in,

with Lake Michigan over them. Their only light was from small lamps carried in each man's hat. What if the earth should cave in? Often they could hear the paddle-wheels of a steamer as it passed over their heads.

One day a hole was made, through which water began to drip into the tunnel. The men fled in terror, but soon returned, fixed the hole, and went on with their work. Sometimes they found gas in the gravel. After lighting this, they ran away until it had burned out, for it was very dangerous. Many visitors came, which greatly pleased the men. Whenever a person went into the tunnel, he had to put on a suit of old clothes. Little mules hitched to cars carried the visitors through the gloomy place. Many pieces of clay were carried away as souvenirs.

Steadily the two parties worked towards each other. On the 24th day of November, 1866, the morning papers said that they had but a thin wall of clay between them. The great question was, "Will they meet or will they pass each other?" The joy of the citizens was great, but that of the miners was greater when they found that they had met within the space of an inch. The men shook each other's hands, and loud shouts and hurrahs were heard on every side. Had they not reason to rejoice, when they had done the work which the world said could not be done?

When the tunnel was finished, it was joined to a large well in the city, which was under a building called the "Waterworks." This building had large pumps which pumped the water from the well into a reservoir. From the reservoir it was forced into large pipes which were laid under the streets of the city. Smaller pipes were joined to these large ones, and these carried the water into the houses. The faucets were turned, and the people received their water without any trouble.